

Academic Misconduct Policy

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Last amended by: Tim Johnson

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ThinkSpace Education (TSE) is committed to academic integrity and to upholding the standards of postgraduate education. Academic misconduct undermines the value of qualifications and is unfair to students who complete their work honestly.
- 1.2 TSE operates under the AUB Academic Misconduct Policy, which forms part of the AUB Regulatory Framework at <https://aub.ac.uk/regulations>. That policy is the governing framework for all academic misconduct matters involving TSE students.
- 1.3 This policy describes TSE's responsibilities at Stage 1 of the academic misconduct process. It should be read alongside the AUB Academic Misconduct Policy.
- 1.4 This policy is owned by the Head of Postgraduate Education (HPE) and is reviewed annually.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all students registered on TSE postgraduate programmes leading to an award validated by Arts University Bournemouth (AUB).
- 2.2 It applies to all assessed work submitted as part of a TSE programme, regardless of the format or the channel through which it is submitted.
- 2.3 Academic misconduct identified after an award has been conferred may still be investigated and, if proven, may result in the award being rescinded by AUB.

3 Forms of Academic Misconduct

- 3.1 The AUB Academic Misconduct Policy defines the following main forms of academic misconduct. This list is not exhaustive.
- 3.2 Plagiarism: using another person's work — including ideas, text, images, diagrams, data, or code — without proper acknowledgement, whether from published sources, other students, or AI-generated content.
- 3.3 Collusion: collaborating with another person on work that is required to be completed independently, unless explicitly permitted by the assessment brief.
- 3.4 Contract cheating: submitting work that has been produced by a third party — whether purchased, commissioned, or otherwise obtained — as one's own.
- 3.5 Falsification and fabrication: inventing, manipulating, or misrepresenting data, sources, or other evidence; or falsely claiming that work was submitted on time when it was not.
- 3.6 Self-plagiarism (recycling): submitting work, or a substantial portion of work, that has already been submitted for another module or qualification, without prior written agreement from the HPE.
- 3.7 Ethical misconduct: conducting research involving human participants, personal data, or sensitive material without the appropriate ethical approval or in breach of ethical protocols.
- 3.8 Unauthorised use of artificial intelligence: using AI tools to generate assessed work in a manner not permitted by the assessment brief or TSE's AI Use Policy.

4 Academic Integrity Responsibilities

4.1 Student Responsibilities

- 4.2 All students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic misconduct and for ensuring that all work submitted for assessment is their own.
- 4.3 Students are expected to familiarise themselves with TSE's AI Use Policy and with the guidance on academic writing provided in the TSE postgraduate introduction course.
- 4.4 Ignorance of what constitutes academic misconduct is not a defence.

4.5 Tutor and Staff Responsibilities

- 4.6 Tutors are expected to introduce students to the principles of good academic practice and academic integrity at the start of their studies, in accordance with AUB's expectations for TSE.
- 4.7 Where a tutor suspects academic misconduct, they must report their concern to the HPE promptly. Tutors should not investigate allegations independently or raise concerns directly with the student before notifying the HPE.
- 4.8 The HPE is responsible for conducting all Stage 1 investigations.

5 Reporting an Allegation

- 5.1 Allegations of academic misconduct must be reported in writing to the HPE at tim@thinkspace.ac.uk.
- 5.2 The report should include: the name and TSE Student Number of the student concerned; the module and assignment affected; the nature of the suspected misconduct; and any supporting evidence (for example, similarity reports, source material, or VLE logs).
- 5.3 Allegations should be raised as soon as possible after the concern is identified, and before a mark is formally recorded where practicable.
- 5.4 Where a concern arises during marking, the tutor should withhold the mark and notify the HPE immediately. The mark should not be communicated to the student until Stage 1 has concluded.

6 Stage 1 — TSE Investigation

6.1 Overview

- 6.2 Stage 1 is conducted by the HPE. Its purpose is to investigate the allegation and reach one of two findings:
 - (a) No case to answer — the allegation is not substantiated and the matter is closed; or
 - (b) Case to answer — the allegation is substantiated and the matter is referred to AUB for Stage 2.
- 6.3 TSE does not impose academic penalties. All decisions about sanctions rest with AUB.

6.4 Notification

- 6.5 The HPE will acknowledge the allegation to the reporting tutor or staff member within five working days of receipt.
- 6.6 The student will be notified in writing within five working days of the allegation being received. The notification will:
 - (a) state clearly that an allegation of academic misconduct has been raised;
 - (b) describe the nature of the alleged misconduct;

- (c) identify the module and assignment concerned;
- (d) provide a copy of, or access to, the evidence on which the allegation is based; and
- (e) invite the student to submit a written response within ten working days.

6.7 Student Rights During Stage 1

6.8 The student has the right to:

- (a) be informed of the allegation and the supporting evidence;
- (b) submit a written response before any finding is made;
- (c) be accompanied by a fellow student or friend (but not a legal representative) at any meeting convened as part of the investigation; and
- (d) request a meeting with the HPE to discuss the allegation.

6.9 Students are encouraged to engage with the Stage 1 process. If a student fails to respond within the timeframe given, the HPE may proceed to a finding on the basis of the available evidence.

6.10 Investigation

6.11 The HPE will review all available evidence, including the submitted work, the supporting materials provided by the reporting tutor, and any response from the student.

6.12 The HPE may request additional information from the reporting tutor, the student, or other relevant parties during the investigation.

6.13 The investigation will be completed, and the student notified of the outcome in writing, within twenty working days of the student's response deadline. Where this is not possible, the student will be informed of the revised timescale.

6.14 Outcomes

6.15 Where the HPE finds no case to answer, the student will be notified in writing and the matter will be closed. The withheld mark, if any, will be released.

6.16 Where the HPE finds a case to answer, the matter will be referred to AUB for Stage 2. The student will be notified in writing that the case is being referred, with a summary of the HPE's findings and the evidence on which they are based.

6.17 The HPE's Stage 1 finding is not a determination of guilt or a sanction. It is a decision that there is sufficient evidence for the matter to be considered formally by AUB.

7 Interim Measures

7.1 While a Stage 1 investigation is ongoing, the HPE may take precautionary measures where necessary to protect the integrity of the assessment process. These are not punitive and do not indicate a finding of misconduct.

7.2 Precautionary measures may include withholding a mark pending the outcome of the investigation, or asking the student to resubmit work under defined conditions where there is genuine uncertainty about authorship.

7.3 Any precautionary measures will be communicated to the student in writing with the reasons for them.

8 Stage 2 — AUB Process

8.1 Where TSE refers a case to AUB following a Stage 1 finding, AUB will conduct its own investigation in accordance with the AUB Academic Misconduct Policy.

- 8.2 AUB's process may result in a range of outcomes, including: no further action; a formal warning; a mark reduction; a fail for the module with the right of referral removed; suspension; exclusion from the programme; or rescission of an awarded degree.
- 8.3 The AUB Academic Misconduct Policy is available at <https://aub.ac.uk/regulations>. Students referred to AUB at Stage 2 will be provided with a copy and given appropriate guidance.
- 8.4 Students have the right to engage with AUB's process independently of TSE's Stage 1 involvement.

9 Confidentiality

- 9.1 All academic misconduct investigations will be handled with discretion. Information will only be shared with those who need to be involved in the investigation or its outcome.
- 9.2 Information may be shared with AUB where a case is referred to Stage 2, and with external examiners or auditors where required.
- 9.3 Personal data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and TSE's Privacy Notice.

10 Related Documents

- 10.1 The following documents should be read alongside this policy:
 - (a) AUB Academic Misconduct Policy — <https://aub.ac.uk/regulations>
 - (b) TSE Student Contract
 - (c) TSE Academic Appeals Policy
 - (d) TSE AI Use Policy (in the postgraduate introduction course)
 - (e) TSE Student Code of Conduct
 - (f) TSE Assessment Regulations